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ABSTRACT

The university is responsible to its surrounding community as well as its internal constituency. The university must consult with community organizations and win their approval for its plans for expansion or face the possibility of delays and financial loss. Urban universities face common problems with surrounding communities when expanding. Community organizations question: the necessity for campus expansion; whether university plans are revealed to the community; university sensitivity to the problems of resident relocation; the failure of the university to include multi-use buildings in its plans; and university efforts to reconcile differences with the community. (Author/CS)

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COMMUNITY CONSTRAINTS ON ACADEMIC PLANNING:

MYTHS AND REALITIES

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COMMUNITY CONSTRAINTS ON ACADEMIC PLANNING:

MYTHS AND REALITIES

In the past decade, many universities have come under the critical evaluation of their several constituencies. Students have shifted their expressed dissatisfaction from cafeteria food and dormitory conditions to questioning and sometimes challenging university educational programs, purposes, and goals. This evaluative process has served to unsettle and, in general, aggravate administrators, faculty, alumni, and trustees. However, concurrent with the internal criticisms and evaluation, similar demands and evaluations have come from a variety of external groups--groups usually outside the realm of traditionally considered constituencies. Thus, from within and without, the university is being barraged by a variety of unsettling demands and influences. This has come at a time in which universities have reached a societal state in which they are in many respects big business--e.g., one of the largest employers and purchasers of goods and services in their town or city, and one of the most significant societal purveyors of culture and things intellectual. This has usually meant that universities have come of age only to find that they are not what they thought they were, or at least are not what many want them to be.

For example, one mythology has been that universities need only respond to students, faculty, trustees, and traditional sources of funding. The reality, as shown by the Pittsburgh experience and the experience of other universities, is that universities must take into account the <u>total</u> range of public, private, and political interests which may singu-

larly or cooperatively work against an institution's plans for expansion. While the university mission is broad, the constraints which influence its local interests are parochial.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the campus expansion experience of a state-related urban university--the University of Pittsburgh--in an attempt to show how the Univeristy's attempt at implementing its campus master plan served to uncover several mythologies and realities in regard to the campus planning process. In order to facilitate discussion, our intent is to be selective and succinct, rather than exhaustive.

Expansion at Pitt: Background and Overview*

The University of Pittsburgh is a non-sectarian coeducational institution. Along with Penn State and Temple, it makes up the larger portion of the public university sector of the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education. Since 1966, the bulk of the University's educational programs and additions to the physical plant have been state-funded; it is a de facto state university.

The University's main campus is located in Oakland, a viable working and middle-class, bi-ethnic community about three miles east of the center city. Oakland has been suitably termed the "second city" by several leading city planners.

Reference to Oakland as the second city is due to its role as the city's cultural center. Also located in Oakland, in addition to the University of Pittsburgh complex, are Carnegie-Mellon University, Carlow College, the Carnegie Library Complex, including a museum and music hall, the Pittsburgh Playhouse, and the Syria Mosque (a large auditorium facility).

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*This section draws upon material provided by Bernard J. Kobosky, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs, University of Pittsburgh.

The main campus covers 125 acres, and Pitt owns and operates 45 buildings within this area. This includes the University Health Center, a focal point for the health-related professions with five major hospitals who have teaching and research affiliations with the University. In addition, during recent years the University has leased upwards of 100,000 square feet of space to accommodate current office and classroom demands.

In the northwestern part of the state, the University has four regional campuses, small but daily growing manifestations of an urban university outside of its urban home.

In the 1970-71 academic year, the University had 16,800 full-time students on its main campus, with an additional 12,000 part-time students who were enrolled in the School of General Studies. Of the 16,800 full-time students, some 5,000 were graduate students. The enrollment is expected to grow moderately for the rest of the decade. The student body on the main campus has increased each year by the addition of juniors transferring from our regional campuses. Last year, the University's total student body numbered 30,900 (including regional campuses) with 92 per cent of the students located on the Oakland Campus. In addition, there are 2,500 faculty and 3,000 staff members on the Oakland Campus.

In 1959, when it became clear that a new civic stadium eventually would be built, the old Forbes Field site became an important and logical area for University expansion. It was subsequently purchased by the General State Authority for the University.

Nothing was done in the way of really comprehensive planning for the area, until shortly after the start of the administration of the present

Chancellor in 1967. At that time it was felt the University needed an overall master plan for its campus and clearly-defined campus boundaries.

This plan, when it was developed, was widely publicized in the city and in the adjacent Oakland community. Models and charts were shown to various community groups, and, following a request at one community meeting, the boundaries were formally recorded in the minutes of the Board of Trustees in order to get this commitment on record and to help assure its continuity with future administrations of the University.

In the Forbes Field area, the University proposed a four-phase project, with the first phase embracing parts of the Forbes Field site, and subsequent phases to cover a two-block area contiguous to Forbes Field. Two structures were to be developed on the initial site--one a quadrangle building to house the University's School of Education and the Departments of the Social Sciences, and the other, a separate building for the University's School of Law.

These plans were discussed in detail with all the relevant community organizations, such as Model Cities, the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, and the City Planning Department. No objections were raised to the project at that time, and the University then made formal application to the General State Authority for funding.

Initial funding for Forbes Phase I was provided in 1968. The cost of the project at that time was estimated to be about $30 million. Construction was scheduled to begin in early 1970, with completion about two years later. In the Spring and Summer of 1969, the General State Authority began acquiring residential properties contiguous to Forbes Field.

But in 1970, the implementation of these plans, made in good faith, suffered the first of what turned out to be a two-year series of delays.

Forbes Field did not become available to the University until mid-year because of delays in completion of the new Three Rivers Stadium. In conjunction with the Black Construction Coalition's effort to obtain more minority employment in the building trades, the University participated in a moratorium on all new building projects. There also were administrative changes within some of the key groups with which the University had been discussing its plans. These groups included the Oakland Model Cities organization and a new city administration which had come into office under a party independent mayor. In addition, in late 1970 and early 1971, several ad hoc community groups which had not existed at the time of the initial planning arose to express their concern over certain aspects of the plan.

As a result, the construction of two additional projects, physically unrelated (a hillside dormitory and the Learning Research and Development Center), were postponed. Plans for the dormitory have yet to be finalized, and the demolition of Forbes Field has recently been completed. In addition, the involvement of these ad hoc groups has resulted in the abandonment of the master plan at a cost of more than $2 million.

In the remainder of this paper, we will discuss some of the lessons learned--the myths and realities--in Pitt's attempt at new facilities construction in the face of concerted community opposition. The problems Pitt has faced are, in part, the result of the failure of traditional academic planning concepts.

Myths and Realities

As we mentioned earlier, one myth has been that for their maintenance and viability, universities need only placate, and build bridges to, their

students, faculty, trustees, and funding sources. At Pitt, the reality has been a severe financial loss, and lengthy delays in construction of facilities which were required to accommodate a decade's growth. These losses are directly attributable to the rise and subsequent coalition of several ad hoc community groups.

A second myth is that the local institution is unique--in other words, the experiences of each urban university is unrelated to the others. In reality, the patterns of citizen opposition to the expansion of university physical plants seem to be universal. The commonality of the issues involved in citizen opposition to University expansion is suggested by the Cox Commission Report.[1] We mention the Cox Report because much of the community criticism leveled at Columbia University is identical to the Oakland community's criticism of the University. Both at Columbia and at Pitt the community questioned: (1) the necessity for campus expansion; (2) whether university plans were revealed to the community; (3) university sensitivity to the problems of resident relocation; (4) the failure of the university to include multi-use buildings in its plans; and (5) university efforts to reconcile differences with the community. Thus, there were similar experiences which were applicable.

The third myth has to do with changes in the national political culture and its applicability to the local scene, and this is, in part, what makes the experiences of other universities identical. What we are suggesting is that there is a new political ethos which says that those outside institutional power bases must have a voice in institutional

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[1] Crisis at Columbia, New York: Random House, 1968.

decision-making. It is a demand for, in fact, an expectation, that participatory democracy will apply to all.

A fourth myth suggests that those who object most strenuously to expansion are those most directly affected, i.e., those who are to be displaced. At Pitt, it is our experience that the most determined opposition came from persons whose interests were geographically on the periphery of the expansion area. We should point out also that in Pittsburgh the ad hoc community groups who objected to University expansion were assisted in their formation and subsequent maintenance by a City Planning department that has adopted a citizen advocacy planning posture, and by the presence of a mayor who is perceived as anti-establishment. In addition, there occurred a critical event which seems to have served to legitimate opposition to University expansion. This event was the University's plan to build a high-rise dormitory adjoining a University-owned and operated elementary school, which would cause an alteration of the school's playground, and, in general, increase the vehicular traffic in the school area. It is this type of event that can rally those who are potentially the most effective in organizing opposition to university plans--namely, the middle and professional classes. In contrast, the "Group for the Preservation of Pitt Planning" consists of an alliance of property owners whose properties were originally to be acquired by the University. Finally, it should be noted that those who benefit the most from expansion--faculty and students--cannot be counted upon to rally to the university's defense. At Pitt and Columbia, although most of the opposition leadership was comprised of students and faculty, the majority were curiously silent and uninvolved.

Conclusions

As a result of these experiences, we conclude that a program which seeks to define the role and adjustment process of a growing institution is not fully understood by either the university or the community. The process requires the development of a workable and stable interface which permits the university to understand and help maintain the community's viability and integrity and vice versa. The result of this process is the institutionalization of a university administrative program which provides for regular interaction with community representatives.

Unless the university is to be continually involved in crises and moratoriums of its plans, its objectives must be pursued by the following steps:

1. The community must be regarded as a viable force, a factor in obtaining public consent for an expansion policy, particularly where land acquisition, relocation of residents and businesses, and changes in zoning are required.

2. Intra-university guidelines must be established which would assist in defining the multiple concerns which are related to campus expansion by the university-community. Related to this is the internal responsibility for awareness by the various university subdivisions of their own particular demands on the community which are expressed as a part of the overall expansion plan. This responsibility too often, particularly on the part of potential proponents, does not entail an individual commitment to assist the institution in its community-related endeavors.

3. Do more than placate angry residents by building confidence and positively showing how the university views the community and

what it is willing to do to protect and insure the community's growth and survival. At this point, it might be a good idea to consider what the university and the community desires really are. Keep in mind that a desire is something which is hoped for as distinguished from a strong authoritarian request--or a demand.

University Desires

---- Expansion room to meet current and future requirements;

---- Parking; and

---- A university-oriented community which provides for (a) housing for university faculty; (b) housing for minority students; and (c) modern shopping areas.

Community Desires

---- Minimum encroachment;

---- Minimum demolition of housing;

---- Lower income housing opportunities;

---- Better shopping, but at lower prices;

---- Parking; and

---- A re-evaluation of the educational process and its product (definitions of education serve to structure the perceptions of the number, type, and kind of university facilities required).

4. And finally, in consideration of a mutual exploration of these desires, the university should elicit the community's response. It is important that the university take the initiative and involve the community instead of allowing the community to involve the

university. All too often this procedure has been reversed; the results have been costly delays, antagonism, mistrust and open hostility to the university.

The ability of a university to get along with its immediate neighbors is an historical and crucial aspect of any town-gown relationship. Most universities pay little or no taxes, and they do not vote. Their value is often not appreciated, sometimes for good reasons. Lack of college interest in community concerns, the effect of large scale clearance and the physical isolation of the institution have not done much to bridge the credibility gap. The traditional strategy of the university has been to retreat from the city or to become isolated from it. This is a posture which should not be continued.